

Kenneth Gaburo

Lingua II: Maledetto

(Composition for 7 Virtuoso Speakers) 1967-8 (44:25)

Performed by NMCE III members: Alan Johnson, Elinor Barron,
Bruce Leibig, Sherry Dorn, Bonnie Mara Barnett, Robert MacDougall,
Bruce Rittenbach; directed by Kenneth Gaburo

BUT,

Language is context-bound and context is language-bound. Thus, any attempt to describe that which *Maledetto* already puts forth would require either a complete re-statement of the work (obviously ridiculous), or some meaningful extractions (obviously simplistic and censorial). But, to put forth the assertion that *Maledetto* is a bounded, self-contained entity requires the further assertion that any other language which attends to it, i.e., any and all statements which give/gave rise to it, and any and all statements which follow/followed from it, resides in the domain of a para-language. A para-language is herein defined as some sort of corona which surrounds, accompanies, and presumably attends to a given composition, but is not the composition, nor can it be. Para-languages appear. Sometimes they seem to constructively fulfill (I think) the need to go beyond that which any particular phenomenon (say a composition) generates, and sometimes they seem to replace (I think) the very language they are “para’s” of.

BUT,

More precisely, *Maledetto* is sub-context-bound because it belongs to *Lingua* (a massive six-hour theater piece written between 1965-1970). The four segments are: *Lingua I: Poems and Other Theaters*, (Inside, The Flight of Sparrow, Dante’s Joynt, Mouth-Piece, Poesies, Glass); *Lingua II: Maledetto*, (Composition for 7 Virtuoso Speakers); *Lingua III: In The Can*, (a Dialectic Mix In 3 Rounds); *Lingua IV: The Flow of (I)*, (Composition for Assorted Phenomena). *Lingua* speaks out for language as my compositional concern and thus reflects the expression: Compositional Linguistics (i.e., language as music, and music as language). In this regard the range of *Lingua* extends from nonverbal communication to structural linguistics (e.g., generative grammars), from explorations beyond *concrète* poetry and text-setting (e.g., What is constituted by the expression: minimal intelligibility?) to contextuality (e.g., the structure of a composition is looking at you), from sound for its own sake (e.g., the acoustical properties of language) and to perception (e.g., What is constituted by the expression: observer?). These pursuits fall out into three broad and ultimately mutually inclusive areas, namely: physiological, acoustical, and structural linguistics. It should be obvious that the articulation and reception of even the most primitive musical signal likewise embraces these areas. From this it follows that one can view each human as a unique and complex linguistic system, capable of generating more than one kind of language at a time. Say, trivially, sound, gesture, energy, thought, feeling. Thus each human can be viewed as a contrapuntal, rather than a mono-lingual system. So can a composition. *Lingua* as a total structure, and *Maledetto* as a particular segment of that structure, places itself right in the middle of this conceptual position.

BUT,

Since it is also theatrical, the “theater-*Maledetto*” cannot be the “disc-*Maledetto*,” for here it necessarily leaves out such matters as the kinetic energy transmitted by the performers, the crucial function of observer feedback, the intimate salon-living room, voyeur-like atmosphere. However, there is included the long introduction of phoneme (S) which: (a) bridges the gap between the last term of *Lingua I* (Glass), and the first term of *Lingua II* (Screw), (b) mixes with audience chatter as they move in on the already-present-and-articulating *Maledetto* performers after intermission, and (c) is a primary structural element.

BUT,

Statistically, Maledetto was written during 1967–8. Rehearsals began in my garage in the summer of 1969 simultaneously with the formation of NMCE III (a group concerned with gesture, action, talk, and theater music). It was premiered at the San Diego Ballet Theater Studio, October 31, 1969. The last NMCE III public performance occurred at UC-Riverside, November 18, 1972. During that period some 250 hours were spent on Maledetto. It was performed about forty times in environments from Los Angeles to New York and Washington, and non-statistically: For, as part of its charge, NMCE III had not only a desire to probe deeply into each composition which it undertook, but to investigate the very process and nature of performing, i.e., to discover what it meant/means to be in, into, within, inside a composition as distinct from merely reproducing the signs of a composition. In short, (although this must be a subject for an extended discourse elsewhere), the process of probing Maledetto was the process of transforming an explicit, detached object (i.e., a “score” presented to NMCE III) into an implicit awareness of subject (i.e., for all purposes NMCE III was Maledetto). I shall never forget the group nor the para-linguistic components which enclosed that three-year drive, including: BR’s difficulty with rolled R’s, RMD’s concern with getting his reverberant voice soft enough, BB’s incessant glee each time she expressed “I affirm the right to singular bargaining with all of the collective governing organs,” BL’s machine-gun precision given his incredible list of fricative curses. SD’s fear that as an actress she could not also be a musician, EB’s efforts to get into a child-like state, AJ’s approach to “(7) stopper-screws, such as are described by Cipriano Piccolpasso for his pottery bottles,” (at a wpm rate of 300), my not-without-agonny determination to not impose as composer, but to help the group reach its own Maledetto. And, thus, while I believe this recording to be impeccable, it is so only insofar as it is NMCE III, and therefore is not a model to be imitated, but simply “A Maledetto.”

BUT,

Pre-composition is also a para-language of quite another kind, and has always been necessary for me. In one sense it involves serious research which follows from an initial, intuitive notion of the parameters of a composition-to-be, and which eventually provides me with some sort of linguistic foundation. In another sense, pre-composition allows for the formation of precise structural questions of such substance to me that the act of composing, thereby initiated, necessarily becomes the act of seeking and finding answers to these questions. In the case of Maledetto my intuitive urge was to do a curse piece. Eventually the screw became my metaphor. On the research level of verbal language, per se, (to say nothing of the structuring of other compositional parameters), I spent about six months reading everything I could find relative to the subject, from mechanical technology (including that of Greek and Roman Antiquity), and slang and its analogues, and medical documents having to do with the physical, moral, ethical aspects of artificial insemination, to the elaborate means by which certain extracts are obtained from animals in the production of perfume. At the same time I was deeply involved in such coronas as Chomsky’s: *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (MIT Press), Whorf’s: *Language, Thought, and Reality* (MIT Press), Levi-Strauss’s: *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press), Merleau-Ponty’s: *Phenomenology of Perception* (Humanities Press), and Grotowski’s: *Towards a Poor Theater* (Clarion). Thus, in a certain verismo-and-statistical sense Maledetto is simply a document of facts (screw research), supported by whatever else I was (into). But, the transformation of fact and experience into metaphor is quite another matter. Certainly it can be easily assumed that Maledetto’s explicit scatology reflects one structural question I posed. But even from so constricted a view an answer does not come easily, for is Maledetto scatological? Or, is Maledetto scatologically *not* scatological? Or, Is Maledetto not scatological? However, questions I really raised, the answers to which I believe Maledetto to contain in its deep structure, I prefer to leave to the observer to discover.

BUT,

The para-language of Maledetto generated by the language of Maledetto as it inserted its structure right between 1969 and 1973 has been fascinating in its own right, and has resulted in a Foundation, which consists solely of a large, growing, pulsating box of collected anecdotes, tiny grooved objects received in the mail, assorted-and-related bric-a-brac, critical reviews, and general commentary, and thus it was that Barry (the poet) C., came to Muse: “It is obvious that one cannot engage Maledetto while in bed munching pizza with one’s best friend,” and Andrew (*High Fidelity*) D., came to Avow: “my reaction was—screw it,” and Walter B. (alias Snoopy, Jr., alias Peanuts International Ltd.) S., came to Labialize: “at long last we may be on the verge of discovering the origin of those recent earthquakes in California,” (with reference to NMCE

III), (and to labiate): “the faults according to certain unnamed scientists were held together with the land masses by tremendous screws,” and Manfred (the bio-cyberneticist) C., came to Enquire about dizziness as an “essentic” form because Maledetto made him so, and William (the composer) B., came to Decode the cry in Maledetto’s deep structure, and thus it was that Donald (*San Diego Union*) D., and Alan (*Washington Post*) K., and Irving (*Washington Evening Star*) L., and John (*Los Angeles Times*) R., in that order came to Entertain: “the idea was much too long, and largely a failure, unless the intention was to bore,” “sophomoric,” “of one thing you may be sure, Compositional Linguistics has nothing to do with music as music, or language as language,” “his (Gaburo’s) predilection in his work for sophomoric sexual innuendoes (which marred *Lingua II* to no purpose as well) seemed in the final analysis less a dramatic device than a personal hang-up,” and William (the percussionist) P., came To Tears but otherwise could not speak, and Oh, as the box gets larger, a para-Maledetto emerges.

BUT,

We, (NMCE III and eye) have put it away. It was necessary for me to make it, otherwise it wouldn’t exist. It was necessary for NMCE III to be within it otherwise it wouldn’t exist. Now that it does, I immodestly submit that it is indestructible. Not so simply because its existence is independent of any para-language which addresses or does not address it, nor because one’s view of it may be thought to be independent of its view of one, nor because it won’t translate, BUT simply because sometime (say) in a conversation (say) between (say) two people (say) it should be possible (say) and (say) desirable (say) to simply (say) perhaps with a slight knowing-nod of the heads, say: AH () HAH

—*Kenneth Gaburo*, December, 1973
La Jolla, California

This recording was made possible by a grant from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc.
Produced by Carter Harman
Recorded by Peter Middleton under the supervision of the composer.
MALEDETTO-MS (ASCAP)

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)